1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Mawlid Salma (Prophet's Life-story).

These books are usually obtained from an itinerary vendor, who occasionally visits the village. Amongst those who own books, three persons actually possess the bulk of the books found in the village: they are the Sheikh of the recognized 'Kuttab', a village school teacher, and an ambitious young man who owns a shop in the village at present, after having spent more than ten years in Cairo and Alexandria. Yet perhaps none of these people possess more than a dozen books.

As to the spread of the newspapers, there are ten persons in this community of over three thousand people who buy newspapers, although not regularly. They get them from a distributor travelling by local train. Three of the newspaper buyers are shopkeepers, while two others are teachers in the compulsory school. News naturally infiltrates to a large extent through reading aloud the news in the village gatherings, or through borrowing the newspapers. Up to 1951 there was no radio set in the village and, of course, no cinema; thus contact with the outside world, as far as these aids are concerned, was entirely absent.

The extent of literacy in this community could also be expressed in the number of people who have been to any school other than those educational institutions existing in the village (before the establishment of the primary school in the village). The following is a list enumerating all the boys and men who are receiving some kind of education outside the village:[1]

Nine boys in the primary school in Aswan (under 12 years old).

One boy in the secondary school in Aswan (14 years old).

Six boys in the Training College for Elementary Teachers in Aswan.

Two elementary school teachers who are actually teaching in the village compulsory school.

One higher education.

In analysing these educated people from the village, it is important to show the various incentives for their education. Four of those in the primary school and the elementary training college are cousins: the father of two of them is an Azharite and a teacher at the village school, and it is not surprising that he should send his two sons to school in Aswan. Two years ago, however, his younger brother quarrelled with him, and decided to vie with him at every turn, even in sending two of his sons to the same schools as those of his brother. Two of the other boys are sons of a relatively well-off woman who forced her husband to divorce her. She then married a younger man, and managed to keep her two sons under her custody by sending them to school and personally bearing the expenses incurred by their education in Aswan, as the father himself could not do so. One of the boys in the primary school in Aswan is the son of a blind man who possesses practically no land and on receiving aid (£E2 a month) for his disability from the Ministry of Endowment, decided to send his son to school.

[1] There are no village girls at all who have received or are receiving education outside the village compulsory school.

The first and most urgent need, let it be said again, is education. /183

"It is my opinion that every reform which is not founded on the education of the people is destined to fail, or at least to take a very long time—and the people's time is precious. /185 /203

"Nothing will ever come of building model villages, or of using the cinema and the wireless to give advice on health and social matters, unless the people are educated and enabled to make use of all these things." (Article in Al-Mussawar No. 800 by 'Abdel-Qader Hamza Pasha, Senator, 1940.)

Many influential people, however, sincerely believe that to educate the fellah would be to make him unhappy, and that his present state of insensibility and habituation is best for him. He does not suffer so much as one might think, for he does not know what he lacks. To teach him would mean to waken in him demands for comfort and amusement which he could not satisfy, and which would give him a distaste for work on the land. Then what would become of Egypt ? In 1933 a Member of Parliament maintained that the education of the masses was undesirable, and suicidal for Egypt. Many large landowners think the same. /183 /185 /871

This may well be so, if by education is meant the wholly unsuitable programme to be found in the official syllabus of compulsory education. There is no sense in teaching the fellah practices which are useless in the country-side, and are based on purely Western ideas. "This teaching does not give results in proportion to its cost. The Commission therefore advises a radical reorganisation based on a recognition of the need to prepare the young for country life, so as to raise the standard of agricultural production" (''). As for the fellah's distaste for the farm's driving him to the city, this movement comes more from continual poverty than from such teaching. The fellah migrates to the town only because he hopes to earn enough there to enable him to return to the land. /166

It must be said that no depopulation of the countryside has yet been noted. The 1937 census shows a stationary figure for the rural population, in spite of the increased birth rate and the relative decrease of mortality. On the other hand, in the less illiterate villages, and among fellaheen who have returned after a long stay in the city — poorer /162 /166 /184